LEVEL 1 - 44 OF 55 STORIES

Copyright (c) 1987 The New York Times Company;
The New York Times

February 20, 1987, Friday, Late City Final Edition

SECTION: Section A; Page 1, Column 1; National Desk

LENGTH: 1405 words

HEADLINE: MOUNTING DRIVE ON SMOKING STIRS TENSIONS IN WORKPLACE

BYLINE: By ANDREW H. MALCOLM, Special to the New York Times

DATELINE: CHICAGO, Feb. 19

BODY:

The mounting drive to limit public smoking is complicating many personal relationships and creating some serious tensions in the nation's workplace.

The immediate effects range from strained friendships to lawsuits, from verbal confrontations to ostentatious coughing and arm-waving.

Employers are eager to deflate an increasingly emotional issue that links personal health and civil rights. The antismoking drive has spawned advisers and experts, who counsel corporate clients that while some lessons can minimize the distractions and divisiveness, the antismoking movement is inexorable.

Question of Timing Only

''It's just exploded all over the world,'' said Robert Rosner of the Smoking Policy Institute in Seattle. ''The biggest change in the last five years is that it's no longer an 'if' question, it's a 'when' question.''

When Myrna Larry began agitating for no-smoking rules at her job in Minnesota, a few people would not speak to her. She says she got some anonymous late-night telephone calls. And there was at least one unpleasant hallway confrontation. But today there is no opposition because there is no smoking in the offices of that insurance company in St. Paul.

The experiences of Ms. Larry, her employer and her 699 co-workers are being repeated around the country as concern grows about evidence linking smoke in the environment to health damage, even for nonsmokers.

Tension Amid Uncertainty

In some cases, the impetus comes from employees' demands that employers restrict smoking. In others the pressure comes from regulations imposed by state and local governments.

Ironically, experts note, the worst tensions occur before precise restrictions are imposed because both smokers and nonsmokers, now estimated at 70 percent of the work force, are unclear on the rules and their rights.

Already, professionals have drawn other lessons on restrictions. One is to involve smokers and nonsmokers in drafting company regulations. Another is to

2022875312

LEXIS® NEXIS® LEXIS® NEXIS®

Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/prmx0000

(c) 1987 The New York Times, February 20, 1987

be firm but allow ample time for workers to become accustomed to new limits, perhaps gradually introducing steps. A third is for employers simultaneously to offer and promote stop-smoking programs.

Peer Pressure, and Support

Some studies have also shown that while peer pressure is an important element in antismoking enforcement, peer support for smokers struggling to quit is helpful, too.

''We should all keep in mind,'' said John Pinney, executive director of the Institute for the Study of Smoking Behavior and Policy, ''that while smokers are a decreasing minority, there still are 55 million in this country. Most are aware of the dangers and would like to quit if they could. It's important not to be too hard on them. Many of us, including myself, are ex-smokers who began when smoking was socially and even medically acceptable. Some sympathy, understanding and encouragement can often go farther than open confrontation.''

Ms. Larry, who smoked 60 to 100 cigarettes a day until 1976, did not seek confrontation in her office at MSI Insurance Companies in suburban St. Paul. Three years ago she began a campaign of internal memorandums. In notes dispatched to virtually every executive, she observed that while they encouraged policyholders not to smoke, the company in effect encouraged employees to smoke by allowing cigarette machines on the premises.

Contradictions Discerned

''I pointed out,'' she recalls, ''that the computer's operating manual said not to smoke nearby. And if smoke isn't good for a machine, it probably isn't too good for a human.''

Rich Cowles, MSI's communications director, said: ''Myrna became known as a hard-nosed militant. There were some strained relations for sure. But she gets the credit for keeping the issue alive around here. It's amazing how in a corporate setting when the top person says something is going to get done, everyone quickly falls into line.''

The ''top person'' at MSI was Gordon E. Lundquist, a former smoker who became president in 1983. He quickly grew tired of managing the smoking conflict and appointed a committee, including Ms. Larry and some smokers. They recommended increasing restrictions over six months. Mr. Lundquist made it 15 months. He set up prize drawings for nonsmokers, new and old. A stop-smoking group held seminars and those who were able to quit received tuition reimbursements.

A buddy system was also begun. ''It sounds hokey,'' Mr. Cowles concedes, ''but 60 smokers signed up to have a buddy for support during withdrawal.'' The medical department offered ''survival kits'' of candy.

Smoking Areas Reduced

Smoking areas were gradually reduced to a small room off the cafeteria. The ventilation system there became overloaded with blue fumes. ''We will not spend a lot to perpetuate the problem,'' said Mr. Cowles. ''If the new filter works, fine. If not, we'll give people some time and become a totally smoke-free building. I think they expect that eventually now anyway.''

2022875313

LEXIS® NEXIS® LEXIS® NEXIS®

Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/prmx0000

(c) 1987 The New York Times, February 20, 1987

In New York, the State Public Health Council has approved regulations to take effect May 7 that will ban smoking in most public indoor areas and restrict it on the job and in most restaurants.

The new regulations were a response to what the council described as growing public awareness to the health risks associated with second-hand smoke and a growing resentment on the part of nonsmokers of having to breathe smoke-contaminated air.

The rules will have a major impact on businesses, which will be required to provide a smoke-free environment to any worker who requests it. Restaurants with 51 or more seats will be required to designate smoke-free areas.

In Lawrence, Kan., the plan is to have a smoker-free Fire Department. Since October, Chief Jim McSwain has hired only nonsmokers who sign contracts promising never to smoke.

In Marblehead, Mass., Officer Craig Cole, a nonsmoker, spent six years of eight-hour shifts in a patrol car with his partner, Arthur Buckley, a smoker.

''He used to roll his window down partway,'' said Officer Cole, a former smoker from his days in the Vietnam War. ''And I would, too. But inevitably the smoke would come right across my face and I'd go home smelling like a cigarette.''

When Partners Part

Mr. Cole felt he had to decide between his health or his partner. He asked the chief, a pipe smoker, for reassignment to a nonsmoking partner. Now Officer Cole is circulating a petition to ban smoking throughout the 42-member department.

Last month the North Dakota House of Representatives banned smoking while in session, which pleased Dale Marks but threatens Wade Williams's perfect voting record. The Representatives sit side by side. Mr. Williams smokes. Mr. Marks does not. Now, Democratic and Republican smokers gather for legal puffs in the party leaders' offices just off the House floor. And when a vote is called, they all come stampeding back to their seats.

''Oh, I understand how nonsmokers feel,'' says Mr. Williams, a 26-year-old farmer, ''I don't want to bother anybody. When I started smoking, I was alone out on the tractor.''

When school co-workers ignored Gloria Smith's pleas not to smoke around her, the New Orleans teacher took to eating in her classroom. ''I put up with all sorts of ridicule,'' she said. This year Mrs. Smith changed schools. Grumbling Evaporates In San Francisco, which was among the first cities to enact smoking restrictions three years ago, the city's enforcement officer, Bruce Tsutsui, says initial grumbling quickly evaporated. He has had 275 complaints; all were resolved before a formal hearing.

In Alaska, where all workplaces are considered nonsmoking unless employees and employers decide otherwise, some smokers still resent having to make special arrangements. ''It makes you feel like street people,'' said Nicki Ebert, a shivering City Hall worker, who had to smoke outside.

LEXIS® NEXIS® LEXIS® NEXIS®

2022875314

Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/prmx0000

(c) 1987 The New York Times, February 20, 1987

Many companies have found restrictions that do not appear punitive can help many smokers quit. ''A lot of people are just looking for an incentive,'' said Mr. Pinney.

Managers at Atlanta's Superior Insurance Company place a flower on the desk of every new former smoker. Ms. Larry, the Minnesota antismoking advocate who even endured remarks about her weight problem, has no hard feelings and finds herself drawn now to congratulate former smokers.

''Of course, no one ever did or said anything serious to me,'' she says. ''They know I'd kill 'em.''

GRAPHIC: Photo of police officer Craig Cole, who requested reassignment to non-smoking partner (NYT/Rick Friedman); Photo of Myrna Larry, who works in a smoke-free office (NYT/Steve Woit)

SUBJECT: SMOKING; LABOR

NAME: MALCOLM, ANDREW H

2022875315

LEXIS® NEXIS® LEXIS® NEXIS®

Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/prmx0000